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Ananda Purnima Issue

Human Society Is One

THE SAME PEOPLE WHO QUARREL TODAY MAY REJOICE TOGETHER
IN COMMON FRIENDSHIP TOMORROW



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TOOK IT IN THE REVERSE GEAR

In April 2015, a five-minute audio recording of the voice of Shrii P.R. Sarkar came to the surface. The circumstances were odd: it was uploaded by a conspiracy theorist who claims to be an Ananda Margi; a well-known figure on the internet but shadowy as to his real identity. That person did not explain how he had obtained the recording. Twenty-five years had passed since the departure of Shrii Sarkar, and

WHEN BABA WAS ASKED ABOUT ABORTION

■ Ácárya Acyutánanda Avadhúta



Abortion laws vary from country to country, but according to cardinal values, abortion should usually be a crime.

perhaps forty-five years since the likely date of the recording. In spite of the strange circumstances and the likely age of the recording, though, I have never met anyone familiar with the voice and speaking style of Shrii Sarkar who seriously doubts that the recording is authentic. To have forged such a recording would have been a stupendous, and stupendously expensive, technological achievement.

In the recording, Shrii Sarkar first says that abortion is a crime, and then switches to an approach he has used in other discourses as well: he starts with the “descriptive” and moves to the “prescriptive”. What

that means in the case of this talk is that he first *describes* the fact that abortion laws tend to vary from country to country (while abortion is almost always a sin, the *laws* tend to vary from country to country); then he *prescribes* what the law *should* be.

Two voices can be heard in the recording besides that of Shrii Sarkar. One seems to be that of an American, and the other that of a Maharlikan:

American-sounding voice: Should abortion be considered crime always?

Shrii Sarkar: Abortion is [indistinct word] the potentialities, ending the

potentialities of a living being is a crime, certainly. It is a sin. It may or may not be crime. Crime depends on different countries, or the – depends on certain conditions prevailing in different countries. Suicide is a crime in England. And to try to commit suicide is also a crime in England. To commit suicide is a crime in England. To try to commit suicide is also a crime in England. In India, to commit suicide is not a crime. To try to commit suicide is a crime, the police may harass [indistinct word]. And in Japan, to commit suicide is not a crime; to try to commit suicide is also not a crime. In England, if one commits suicide, he will be punished; and if one tries to commit suicide, he will also be punished. If one tries to commit suicide, he'll be punished. His property will be – he will be punished. And if one commits suicide, then also he will be punished after death. His property will be confiscated. After death, he will also be punished, in England. But in India, if one commits suicide, he won't be punished. His property won't be forfeited by the government. But if one tries to commit suicide, he will be punished.

So crime depends on different conditions – spatial, temporal, and personal conditions – of different portions of the world. Hmm?

But there are certain cardinal human values, cardinal human points. Those points remain unassailed. As a matter of principle, abortion is a crime. But when it is done to save the life of the mother, it is not a crime. Hmm?

Maharlikan-sounding voice: We call it "therapeutic abortion".

Shrii Sarkar: [Indistinct word] it is not a crime. The law permits it.

Maharlikan-sounding voice: But sometimes it may also be abused, Bábá. It may also be abused.

Shrii Sarkar: Yes, yes. It has been abused, yes, I know it. It has been abused. There should be proper check, proper control [sounds like "on it"]. [Indistinct word] by a strong medical board, or like that.

Maharlikan-sounding voice: Is it a living body, the embryo?



Shrii Sarkar: You see, fundamentally, there is hardly any difference between you and an embryo. You have come here outside, and [the] embryo is within the mother, that is the difference. And why should you deprive that little man from the joys of life?

Maharlikan-sounding voice: Means, living man.

Shrii Sarkar: Mm. It is not desirable. You are a man, he is also a man. He is now within the body of the mother. And you are outside the body of the mother, that is the difference. You have got no moral right to kill him. When he is not your enemy. It is not at all a crime to kill the enemy, but that embryo is not your enemy. How can a man kill him? How can you kill him? You can't kill him. You have got no moral right to kill him. Hmm?

Maharlikan-sounding voice: Bábá, [indistinct words].

Shrii Sarkar: It has been clearly explained to Ácárya Pran'avánanda.

Maharlikan-sounding voice: Pran'avánanda.

Shrii Sarkar: Just when the spermatozoa becomes one with the ova...

Maharlikan-sounding voice: Then [indistinct word].

Shrii Sarkar: Yes. That *sam'skára*, that mind, that spirit with reactive momenta comes in contact with that embryo with the first moment. Because of its congenial physical structure. Congenial to that psychic structure. Clear?

Maharlikan-sounding voice: Thank you, Bábá, but why should there sometimes, or most of the times, there is a pregnant mother [indistinct words] abortion...

Shrii Sarkar: Spermatozoa is a living being with its peculiar *sam'skára*. Ova is a living being with its peculiar *sam'ska'ra*. And the combination of the two creates a third animal with its own *sam'skára*. And according to its physical structure, having parallelism with certain mental *sam'skára*, the departed soul along with its *sam'skáras* comes in contact with that newly-born embryo. The ova dies. Ova [indistinct word] mind that takes place – mental death of the ova (that ova is also a living creature) that takes place, mental death of the spermatozoa (it is also a living creature). And the third entity, with its own mental *sam'skára*, is created. Clear?

So after *describing* the fact that laws vary, Shrii Sarkar turns to *prescribing*: cardinal human values, he says, dictate that abortion should be a crime. It is not a crime everywhere, we can understand, because cardinal human values do not prevail everywhere. But where they do prevail (where *sadvipras* rule, Proutists can understand), most abortions will be a crime. The only exception Shrii Sarkar mentions is for the life of the mother. He is giving the briefest kind of outline here, and likely he would have made

an exception if the mother faced serious injury also, but he mentions only her life.

To fake the need for such an exception would be an abuse of the exception, and to check such abuses, Shrii Sarkar says, there must be a strong medical board or the like. (If the legal weight of what Shrii Sarkar is saying were not already clear, it is obvious that in order to actually check any abuses, the medical board would have to be backed by the force of law.)

Elsewhere Shrii Sarkar has said:

Those who take great pains to assist the helpless are more civilized and endowed with greater awareness. They are the socially-minded beings who readily embrace the underprivileged, the downtrodden and the rejected people of society.

No one is as totally helpless, underprivileged, downtrodden and rejected as many preborn children. Society must not abdicate its responsibility to protect those of its members who need protection.

Shrii Sarkar did not state, in the brief outline he gave, who the criminal should be when the crime of abortion is committed. In some

countries where abortion has been illegal, both the woman and the abortionist have been guilty of a crime, but in other countries it has been only the abortionist.

During his lifetime, Shrii Sarkar never exhorted his followers to push for strict abortion laws and their enforcement. He may have refrained from doing so because of other battles at the time. But I personally feel that now there is no more important battle than this one, except possibly for the avoidance of a nuclear conflagration or some equally lethal climate catastrophe. Abortion kills 125,000 unborn children around the world every day. If most of those killings violate cardinal human values, as Shrii Sarkar has indicated they do, then this is by far the biggest violation of human rights in the history of the world. So I feel that the time has come to make this our first priority; but it cannot be done until there is a strong consensus among Proutists. At present there are numerous pro-choice Proutists and members of Ananda Marga (that is, Proutists and Margis who support legal abortion). It is time for all pro-choice Proutists and members of Ananda Marga to acknowledge the existence of this recording and respond. ●

